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Ministerial Alliance Against the Digital Divide

July 14, 2004

Chairman Michael K. Powell
Commissioner Kathleen Q. Abernathy
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Kevin J. Martin
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: WC Docket No. 03-133

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners:

The Ministerial Alliance Against the Digital Divide is an organization of Chicago-area ministers devoted to bridging the digital divide between those who have ready access to telecommunications services and those who do not. We strongly oppose any new charges or fees on prepaid calling cards, because such an action would result in higher prices and jeopardize the ability of lower-income and fixed-income consumers to stay connected.

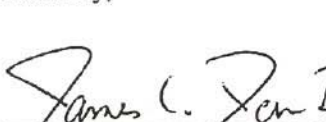
The African-American community is particularly sensitive to any price increase for pre-paid calling cards; approximately 70% of African American households have used them. And the affordability of pre-paid cards is of the utmost importance to lower-income and fixed-income consumers, since they offer an easy, economical way to stay in touch with friends and relatives across the country.


For many people, home phone service is not an option given the high monthly costs and the substantial deposit often required of consumers who have insufficient credit histories. As a result, pre-paid calling cards serve as a dial-tone lifeline for those who cannot afford traditional local phone service. The cards are used to call employers, make doctors appointments, and for many other purposes that we often take for granted.


The FCC's interest in applying new and additional "access charges" and fees to pre-paid calling card services is particularly troubling given the recent price increases for commodities like gasoline, milk and other basic necessities.

We urge you not to raise the cost of pre-paid calling cards with extra charges and fees. Raising the costs associated with pre-paid calling cards will only pose yet another burden on the most vulnerable members of our society.

Sincerely,


Reverend James I. Demus III
Co-Director, MAADD


Reverend William H. Samuels
Co-Director, MAADD


Reverend Walter B. Johnson, Jr.
Co-Director, MAADD